Author’s response to reviews

Title: Trust in Group Decisions: A Scoping Review

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Author’s response to reviews:

April 23, 2019
Dear Dr. Peters,

Thank you for your review of our manuscript “Trust in Group Decisions: A Scoping Review” (MEED-D-19-00110). My co-authors and I are pleased to resubmit our manuscript based on the helpful feedback of the reviewers. Below, we provide a description of how we addressed the reviewer comments and the location of the revisions. These revisions are also noted within the document using track changes.

Daniel J. Schumacher (Reviewer 1)

1) Intro: For me, the discussion of all of the different ways that trust can be viewed gets a little confusing, and I say this as someone who has studied trust, entrustment, and CCCs. I might lay out the various ways that trust can be considered all in one list in 1-2 sentences early in the introduction before getting into a more detailed discussion of any one of these. I believe this would help with the clarity of where the introduction and paper are going. This stated, I am not sure that I would go into some of the detail about the types of trust that is the focus of this paper. This paper focuses on group trust. Your introduction discusses types of trust that are beyond that.
1) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We have revised the Background to briefly mention EPAs as an acknowledgement of trust that has been studied in health professions education contexts. However, we changed this to only encompass a single sentence and focused more on building up the idea of group trust. We hope that our revisions and deletion of several sections in the Background make the purpose of our scoping review more clear.

1) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically paragraphs 2 and 3).

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2) Intro, theoretical framework: I am not convinced that you needed a theoretical framework in the manner in which you used it in this paper. One could argue that the literature review you conduct would/should elicit the parts of a theory for what you are interested in. You elude to this in your final few sentences of this section where you reference your results and proposed model. With this in mind, I think that the content of this section is OK. However, I wonder if this is better positioned in the methods section (in the early part of this section). This would also keep the intro shorter and more focused and help to correct some of the clarity issues that exist in the intro currently.

2) Response: Thank you for pointing this out. We agree that the literature review should elicit parts of a theory in which we are interested. While we tried to shorten this section based upon your thoughtful comments about our Background, we kept the section that mentions the two theories most commonly identified in our literature review: social exchange theory and social information processing theory. However, we felt that these theories were less helpful in designing a model for decision-making groups, so we wanted to explicitly mention that we utilized situated cognition as the underlying theoretical framework of our proposed model. We also wanted to provide some background information on this theory for readers who may not be familiar with situated cognition.

In regards to the position of the Theoretical Framework subsection in our paper, we elected to keep it just prior to the Methods section. We feel more comfortable leaving it in its current position given that we have shortened both the Background and this subsection. We also did not want to inadvertently confuse the reader by putting the Theoretical Framework subsection in the Methods followed immediately by the description of our approach to the scoping review.

2) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically the Theoretical Framework subsection).

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3) Page 8, lines 16-17: Why did you exclude articles from computer science, IT, and economics?
3) Response: We excluded articles from these fields because we felt that the context in which they utilize trust would not be applicable to decision-making groups. For computer science and IT fields, trust was often investigated as a component of a computer algorithm or in the setting of artificial intelligence design. In economics, trust was often investigated as a component of experimental trust games. We felt that none of these contexts really fit with our intention of looking at trust in a group of individuals and had no real relevance to competency committees. We added a sentence to the Methods section to clarify this.

Please also see the comments below to Reviewer #3 in regards to our search strategy and inclusion/exclusion criteria.

3) Location: See revisions to Methods (specifically the end of paragraph 3).

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4) Page 8, lines 28-36: I believe that this description of what you sought to do is much clearer and more succinct than what is provided in the introduction section. I would recommend moving this to the intro and ending the intro with this content.

4) Response: Thank you for pointing out this section of the paper. Based upon the revisions we made to the Background mentioned above and making our final paragraph of the Background more explicit, as you recommend, hopefully this makes the purpose of our review more clear and succinct.

4) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically the paragraph immediately prior to the Theoretical Framework subsection).

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5) Results: I believe that the findings of this study make a meaningful contribution to the literature. This paper will be very helpful as now multiple countries are seeking to structure and refine competency committees. The individual, group, and environmental factors sections are interesting and seem to be of high utility for consideration.

5) Response: Thank you.

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6) Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion: These are all well-written and appropriate.

6) Response: Thank you.

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7) Figures and Tables: These all are clear and support the results and discussion sections well. Table 2, Table 3, and Figure 3 are especially helpful.

7) Response: Thank you.

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Ylva Holzhausen (Reviewer 2)

1) I thank for the opportunity to read and review the manuscript submitted and I would like to congratulate the authors on their comprehensive and conclusive literature review. In recent years, there was a rising interest in the medical education community in the concept of trust and its implications in health education. It is in my eyes a valuable approach to link the findings of the literature study on trust in the context of group decisions directly to the work of competency committees, and I would recommend to further emphasize this link. Please see more detailed comments in the following:

1) Response: Thank you. To emphasize the link of trust in the context of group decisions and the work of competency committees, we address each of your suggestions below.

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2) In some countries, competency committees are a crucial part of the postgraduate medical education program. However, not all readers of the journal might be familiar with the organization and responsibilities of competency committees. It would be helpful to provide in the background section more information on the committees and to also emphasize the link between their work and the research question. The discussion section (p. 19, l 38-51) provides some reasoning on the decision making process of competency committees and I would recommend to provide this information already in the background section.

2) Response: Thank you for bringing up this point. We changed some of the wording to reflect the broad readership of this journal and added some information about competency committees for those who may not be familiar with these groups. We also tried to make the link more clear between their work and our research question. While we kept the wording in the Discussion that
you pointed out, we added the point to the Background section that trust in competency committees is important from the perspective of not only individual members but also the group itself and those who rely on the decisions made by these committees.

2) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically paragraphs 1 and 2).

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3) As already mentioned, I would recommend to further emphasize the link between the work of the competency committees and the research question and findings. This could potentially enhance the practical applicability of the manuscript. Table 3 already provides a very good connection between the research findings and the competency committees, and I would recommend strengthening this aspect throughout the whole manuscript.

3) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We made some edits to the Background to hopefully strengthen the link between the work of competency committees and our research question. As we revised the manuscript, we also tried to make this link more clear with our results and strategically point out where Table 3 may be useful in this context.

3) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically paragraph 2) and Results.

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4) Generally, the manuscript is a bit lengthy (especially the results section). The authors were very accurate in describing all their findings, but the reader might get lost in the sheer abundance of information. Please have a careful look at the manuscript and shorten where possible.

4) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. As we revised the manuscript, we tried to cut out sections of text that were less relevant or better explained in the figures and/or tables.

4) Location: See revisions to Results.

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Boaz Shulruf (Reviewer 3)

1) Thank you for presenting this manuscript for review, which I have read with great interest. The manuscript aims (1) to examine the definition of trust in the context of group decisions; (2) to examine what factors may influence trust within a group and from the perspective of those who rely on competency committees to make collective decisions regarding trainee competence; and (3) to propose a model to illustrate the relationship between trust at the individual and group levels. The aims are of great values. However, it was difficult for me to find the extent to which these aims have been met. In the following I present a few suggestions for the authors which I believe may improve the manuscript and add value to it.

1) Response: Thank you. To clarify how we addressed all three of our aims, we address each of your suggestions below.

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2) Structure: Structuring the manuscript around its aims would better clarify the text and would make it easier for the readers.

2) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We revised and reformatted several of the headings in the Results section to better align this information with the aims of our review.

2) Location: See revisions to Results

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3) Definitions: It is important to establish a set of definition for key concepts/constructs rather than starting with none and looking for these at the literature. For example: a definition of a group is essential and must appear at the beginning of the manuscript. The term collectivism appears towards the end of the manuscript but it is strongly related to the definition of a group and therefore needs to be presented early. Overall it is important to know how a group is defined in this manuscript before trust is discussed.

3) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We also feel that this is important for a review paper such as this. We added the definition of a group to the Background section that we felt is most applicable to this study.

3) Location: See revisions to Background (specifically paragraph 3).

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4) Inclusion/exclusion criteria: Although roughly presented these criteria have not been clear enough. I am doubtful if replicating the literature search based on the information presented would yield the same results. Search strategy needs to be clear transparent and reproducible.

4) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. As a scoping review, we vetted inclusion and exclusion criteria with the study investigators as well as a research librarian. We included articles that pertained to group trust and excluded articles that we felt would not be applicable to decision-making groups.

For transparency and reproducibility, we published our search strategy in Supplemental Digital Appendix 1, which was also developed in conjunction with a research librarian.

We also noted a large degree of heterogeneity in the articles that we reviewed. We felt that our decision to conduct a scoping review rather than a systematic review provided some degree of flexibility as it relates to search strategy reproducibility. As we reviewed articles during this process, we felt that the exclusion criteria we developed were sufficient, especially when there were disagreements on the team as to which articles to exclude, and we ultimately used team consensus to make decisions regarding excluding articles. To improve transparency of our search, we have decided to include a list of the excluded articles and our reasons for exclusion as supplemental data files.

4) Location: See revisions to Methods (specifically paragraph 2), Results (specifically paragraph 1), and Supplemental Digital Appendices 4-7.

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5) Presenting tables with little contribution to the text: The tables and the figures are referred to by the text but not in a way that they add clarity. More importantly, models (i.e. Fig 2-3 ) need careful explanation of all components and associations presented. These have not been clearly presented in the manuscript.

5) Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We altered the wording about how we introduced these tables and figures (with special attention to Figures 2 and 3). Given the large amount of information presented in Figure 3 and Table 3, we elected to not explain every detail to conserve space in the Results section of the manuscript. We tried to include information in the Results section pertaining to the most critical parts and/or sections of the tables/figures that we felt needed additional clarification.

5) Location: See revisions to Results (specifically paragraph 4 in the Definitions of Trust subsection and paragraph 1 in the Proposed Model subsection) and the headings in Figure 3.
6) Overall the topic is of great importance and I command the authors for undertaking this endeavor. I hope they find the comments above helpful.

6) Response: Thank you.

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1) Please read the following information and revise your manuscript as necessary. If your manuscript does not adhere to our editorial requirements, this may cause a delay while this is addressed. Failure to adhere to our policies may result in rejection of your manuscript.

1) Response: Confirmed

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2) Response: Confirmed

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3) Response: Confirmed

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4) Response: Confirmed

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5) Declarations

- Ethics approval and consent to participate
- Consent to publish
- Availability of data and materials
- Competing interests
- Funding
- Authors' Contributions
- Acknowledgements

5) Response: Confirmed

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We greatly appreciate your further review of our manuscript and hope that the revisions we made to the paper as described above meet your expectations. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or for further information.

Sincerely,

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Assistant Professor of Medicine
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences